

HOKKAIDO



Asahiyama Zoo

The zoo, located at the country's northernmost point, opened in 1967. A very popular tourist spot that enables visitors to observe the natural habitat of animals including "Orangutan House" – orangutan's aerial playground – and "Penguin house" – an area to observe penguins with a 360-degree-view in an underwater tunnel.

Hill of Biei

The hill of Biei is a patchwork field of potatoes and flowers on a gently sloping hilly area. A JR railroad divides the area into the "patchwork road" to the north and the "panoramic view" to the south. The picturesque scenery attracts many tourists from around the world.

Hakodate Night View



Mt. Hakodate has earned a three-star rating in the "Michelin Green Guide Japan." It is a very popular sightseeing spot with the official name is the "former theatrical land of the Sapporo Agricultural School." It was originally built in 1878 thanks to the advice of William Smith Clark, who was invited from the US to teach Western science and technology.

Shiretoko Peninsula

Shiretoko was registered as a World Natural Heritage Site in 2005. It is the third such area to be registered in Japan. The Shiretoko Peninsula, known as "the last hidden reservation", is an area of various primeval ecological systems including a coastline of precipitous cliffs over 100 kilometers long, lakes, forests and mountains.

Sapporo Clock Tower

A designated National Important Cultural Property of Japan, continuously counting time, and is the symbol of Sapporo. The official name is the "former theatrical land of the Sapporo Agricultural School." It was originally built in 1878 thanks to the advice of William Smith Clark, who was invited from the US to teach Western science and technology.

MIYAGI

Daisetsuzan National Park

Japan's largest national park (on land) is located in central Hokkaido. The park covers approximately 230,000 hectares. It is called "the roof of Hokkaido" as it consists of approximately 50 kilometers of mountains over 2,000 meters in altitude, of which the highest is Mt. Asahi-dake. This secluded area, which is covered in snow for eight months of the year, provides a home for animals such as the pika, a so-called "ice age survivor."

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MIYAGI

(G7 Finance Minister and Central Bank Governors' Meeting, Sendai)



Matsushima

Matsushima is known for its superb views, which fascinated Date Masamune, a Sengoku warlord and Matsuo Basho, the haiku master. One of the country's most beautiful bays is speckled with 260 islands of various sizes, provides scenery on a large-scale from season to season. Today, tourists from around the world are still fascinated by the views from the Shidaikan, a panoramic observation point, and/or touring around Matsushima Bay in a boat.

Naruko Valley

This valley, about 2.6 kilometers long, is located in the area of "Nakayama-dairsta Onsen" in the Naruko Onsenkyo town. It is known for its famous autumn foliage. The 100-meter-deep valley, carved naturally by the Otari River, is covered with breathtaking autumn leaves from mid-October to the beginning of November.

Zuigan-ji Temple

Warlord Date Masamune, the famed ruler of the region, took five years to build the temple, finishing it in 1609. It is designed in the ornate Momoyama style. The enthusiasm of the Oshu conqueror can still be felt today by learning about the 130 skilled artisans gathered from across the country as well as building materials used to build the temple from Kuman mountain in the Kishu area.

Sendai Tanabata Festival

The number one Tanabata Festival in the country, famous for its traditional Japanese star festival elegance and for its richness in decoration, both of which have been passed on since the founding period during the time of warlord Date Masamune. The festival is held from August 6th through 8th every year.

Akiu Onsen

The historical hot spring of Akiu Onsen, with its magnificent nature and hot spring water, has been popular as a resort throughout the ages. It is known as one of "Japan's three major hot springs" along with Shinano and Iruka hot springs. It is also famous for being loved by warlord Date Masamune.

Sendai Castle (Aoba-yama Park)

Warlord Date Masamune built the castle in 1603. It had been the residence of the Date family for many years. It was burned down by air-raids in 1945. The ruin has become Aoba-yama park, with Gokoku Shrine (a shrine honoring the war dead) at the main enclosure, a monument commemorating a song – Kojo no Tsuki ("The Moon over the Ruined Castle") – by Doi Bansui and a statue of Date Masamune on horseback.

TOYAMA

(G7 Toyama Environment Ministers' Meeting)



In April, when the route opens up after winter, visitors are overwhelmed by the amazing view of up to 20-meter-high snow walls of the famous "Snow Valley". A walk through the snow corridor is possible from April to June. The Alpine Route is open from April 16th through November 30th.

Kurobe Dam & Kurobe Gorge Railway

Take a ride on an old-fashioned open-sided car train to enjoy the views of the Kurobe Gorge, the deepest V-shaped valley in Japan. The Kurobe Gorge Railway departs from Unazuki Onsen, Toyama's most famous hot spring spa.

<Access> 25-minute by Toyama Chihou Tetsudou from JR Kurobe-Unazuki Onsen Station to Unazuki Onsen Station

Toyama Bay Mirage

The Bay has been a well-known spot for its mirages from before the Edo period. From late March to early June, elongated and upside-down views of natural scenery can be viewed from 11 am to 4 pm on a clear day when there is a light wind and the temperature is rising.

Glacier on Mt. Tsurugi-dake

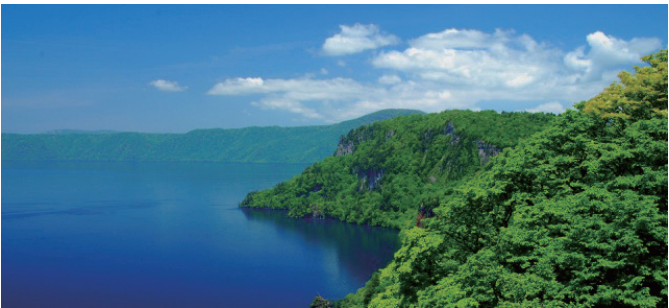
Three glaciers can be found on Mt. Tsurugi-dake, a part of the Northern Alpine Tateyama mountain range standing over 3,000 meters. A recent study revealed them to be first "glaciers" in the country, something that was previously thought not to exist in Japan.

<Access> 35-minute bus ride from Toyama Chihou Tetsudou [Toyama Station] http://foreign.info-toyama.com/en/

Owara-Kaze-no-Bon ("Bon Dance of the Wind") Festival

The festival has been held from September 1 to 3 every year in Yatsuo district, located in the southeastern part of Toyama city. Dancers produce a silent sophisticated dance to a sorrowful melody. The dance has been passed down for over 300 years.

AOMORI



Lake Towada

A caldera lake, originally created by large volcanic eruptions of the Towada volcano about 40,000 years ago. Natural forests spread around the lake with beech and Japanese Judas trees, as well as numerous wild animals. North Japanese hill cherry (Prunus sargentii) and Japanese magnolias bloom in spring; tender greens spread in the summer; foliage fills the area in autumn; and a fantastic blanket of snow covers the area in winter. It is as if nature is continually changing its fashion sense.

Oirase Valley

One of the outstanding scenic areas of Japan, about 14 kilometers long, stretching from Nenokuchi near lake Towada to Mt. Yakeyama. The beauty of the mountain strata was made by landslides after eruptions. Waterfalls alongside the streams are called "Bakulu-kaido" ("the path of falls").

Shirakami Mountains

"Shirakami Mountains" is the general name of a vast mountain range, covering an area from the southern part of Aomori Prefecture to the northeast part of Akita Prefecture. The majority of the area, which totals 16,971 hectares, consists of primeval beech forest and has been registered as a World Heritage Site since 1993. Three quarters of the site is located in Aomori Prefecture.

Hotoke-ga-ura

A number of peculiar-looking white-green colored tuff rocks stretching along the coast have been carved by brutal winter winds and raging waves in the Tsugaru Channel. The calm sea in the summer conjures up the image of the "Pure Land of Perfect Bliss", worthy of the name "Hotoke-ga-ura" (the Inlet of Buddha).

Kabushima Island

A breeding ground of the Black-tailed Gull, which is registered as a natural monument. Millions of gulls fly from the south to lay their eggs in the middle of March every year. The baby gulls hatch in April just as yellow turnip flowers are blooming. The gulls migrate south at the end of the summer.

Tachi-Neputa

The traditional festival of Goshogawara City is about 100 years old and originated around the middle of the Meiji period to the beginning of the Taisho period. Floats over 22 meters in height are paraded through the town, pulled by hundreds of young people. Every year during the festival period from the 4th to 8th of August, Tachi-Neputa, about the size of 7-story-buildings, are pulled, enchanting the crowds of spectators.

FUKUSHIMA



Ozegahara (Oze Marshland)

Oze is one of Japan's best high moors. In 2007, it was designated as the country's 29th national park, and its beautiful nature can be enjoyed throughout the year. In addition, Oze crosses into 4 prefectures: Fukushima, Gunma, Niigata and Tochigi and has 6 entrances. Three entrances, Numayama-odake, Miike and Ozawadaira, are located in Hinoemamura, Fukushima Prefecture, while the Hatomachi-odake Pass, Oshimizu and Fujimishita entrances are located in Katashina-mura, Gunma Prefecture.

Sanjo Falls

A large waterfall about 100 meters high and 300 meters wide. The rich water resources of Ozegahara make it the largest waterfall by volume of water in Japan. It is also one of the country's 100 most beautiful waterfalls. Please be aware that it is closed to traffic from November to May.

Miharu Takizakura

A Nationally Designated Natural Monument, the Prunus pendula "Pendula Rosea" cherry tree, whose estimated age is over 1,000 years old, is one of Japan's three major cherry trees. It is said that "Miharu Takizakura" is so named because when it is in full bloom, its small pale pink flowers hang downwards resembling a waterfall.



Cherry blossom at Hirosaki Castle

A famous castle over 400 years old, with three turrets and five gates, which are designated National Important Cultural Properties. At the end of April, about 2,600 cherry trees bloom, including Yoshino cherry trees and double-flowered cherry trees, and cover the castle park.

Mt. Osore-zan

One of Japan's Three Most Sacred Grounds with a temple founded by Jikaku Daishi in 862 as a place to study Tendai Sect asceticism. People revere the place, famous for the smell of sulfur emitted from the rocks and the sound of a windmill rotating in the wind, as either "Hell" or "Pure Land." The area attracts a lot of worshippers.

Sannai-Maruyama Site

Japan's largest Jomon settlement site, designated as a Special National Historical Site in 2000. The natural environment and lifestyles of the inhabitants are being studied through archeological excavations. It's open to the public and visitors are allowed to freely observe the area.

Iizaka Onsen

One of the most famous and oldest hot springs in the Tohoku region, called "Sabako-no-Yu" in ancient times, it is also one of the three major hot springs in the Onshu area along with Naruko and Akiu. It is said that the hot spring was discovered by Prince Shirogane, the haiku master, Matsuo Basho, stopped at while working on "Oku-no-Hosomichi" in 1689.

Ouchi-juku

"Ouchi-juku" is a post town left over from the Edo period. The sight of over 30 thatched-roof houses standing in rows, resembling the main road connecting Aizu and Nikko, the so-called "Shimotsuke Kaido", is extremely rare. It has been visited by more than 1 million tourists a year.

Soma-Nomaoi (wild horse chasing festival)

A festival over 1,000 years old in which about 500 riders resemble scenes you might find on scrolls from the Sengoku period (warring states period). The festival originated from the founder of the Soma clan, Taira-no Masakado, drilling captured wild horses that were then set free and dedicating them to the gods.

IWATE

Kitayamazaki Cliffs

Over 8 kilometers of dynamic coastline with bizarre rocks and sea-eroded caves of various sizes in 200-meter-high cliffs. It is the most beautiful coastline in the country and is the only place accredited with the "Special A Class" rating from "Japan's Tourist Attraction reviews" conducted by Japan Travel Bureau Foundation.

Chuson-ji Temple

The main temple of the Tendai Buddhist denomination in the Tohoku region, founded by Jikaku Daishi. In the beginning of the 12th century, Fujiwara-no Kiyohira, the founder of the Northern Fujiwara samurai dynasty, built many temples such as Konjiki-do (or "Golden Hall") and Nikai-odo (or "Great Two-Storey Hall"). Numerous national treasures and important cultural properties such as Konjiki-do convey the beauty of Heian art.

Anatooshi-iso at Goishi Kaigan

The scenery of Goishi Kaigan (Goishi Coast) is designated as one of the 100 best sites to enjoy coastline scenery with white sand and green pine trees. The intriguing rock with three holes in the base made by sea-erosion, highlights the amazing ability of nature.

Ryusendo Cavern

Known as one of three major limestone caverns in Japan, it is said that the cave has an overall length of up to 5,000 meters. The pure water bubbling up through the bottom has created many underground lakes. The third lake is 98 meters deep with world-class transparency.

ISHIKAWA



Kenroku-en Garden

Kenroku-en was created as the garden of the Maeda family of the prosperous Kaga domain, and is one of the Three Great Gardens of Japan, along with "Kairakuen" in Mito and "Korakuen" in Okayama. The garden is famous for the exquisite beauty of seasonal transitions, and particularly for exquisite winter scenery, as well as plum trees blossoming in white and red in the spring.

Kanazawa Higashi Chaya District

A historic townscape with houses with beautiful latticed bay-windows. The area called "Kimusoko" stretches along the banks of the Asano River, which runs along the foot of the Utsunoyama mountains, projecting traces of the past. The district was designated as a Nations important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings in 2001.

Natadera Temple

Taicho Jinyu-zenji, a famous shugendo (syncretic Shinto-Buddhist teaching) monk, founded the temple in 717. He believed in the god of Mt. Hakusan and worshipped the Senju Kannon (Thousand-Armed Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) in a cave. In addition, the cave is known as a sacred place that "Tainai-kuguri" practice, a passage through a sanctified cavern that symbolizes rebirth with the blessing of Bodhisattva.

Bandai Bridge and "Yasuragi Tei"

The beautiful six-arch Bandai Bridge crosses the Shinano, Japan's longest and largest river. When spring comes, the riverside promenade "Yasuragi Tei" delights visitors with gorgeous cherry blossoms and colorful tulips.

Furumachi Geigi: the Geisha of Niigata

The Furumachi district of Niigata is regarded as one of the three most famous geisha districts in Japan, along with Gion in Kyoto and Shinbashi in Tokyo. Geigi, the geisha of Niigata, perform songs and dances, embracing visitors with the warm hospitality intrinsic to the culture of Niigata as a port town.

Matsumoto Castle

A national treasure, Matsumoto castle with its 5-level, 6-story tower, is the oldest castle in Japan. It has survived over 400 years of wind and snow, and its original tower from the Warring States period is still intact. It is one of four castles designated as National Treasures; the other three are Himeji, Hikone and Inuyama castles.

Ueda Castle

A residential castle ruin of the Sanada clan, who are known nationally for twice defeating larger Tokugawa armies. Today, the remains are enclosed by a park with flowers and greenery including Zelkova trees over 100 years old and approximately 1,000 cherry trees, which all provide a relaxing environment.

AKITA



Omagari Fireworks

This fireworks competition has been held since 1910. Pyrotechnicians throughout the country compete in the contest that has three categories: "Daytime Fireworks," "Shell size: 10" and "Creative Fireworks." The contest is also known as the biggest and most prestigious fireworks competition in the country, attracting huge crowds from all over the nation every year. The next competition will be held on August 27th, 2016.

Mt. Chokai-san

A peak with a high point of 2,236 meters, located on the border between Akita and Yamagata prefectures. The mountain has been worshipped in Shinto prayers since ancient times because of its imposing figure and repeated tumultuous eruptions that caused concern to the local population. The mountain, also known as "Dewa-Fuji," is highly revered.

Bukeyashiki Street in Kakunodate

Samurai residences run alongside a wide street with continuous walls and large weeping cherry and fir trees. The solid structure of 23 rooms, 29 staircases in a 4-story, 7-level building with hidden chambers, tunnels and staircases, various traps, escape pits, and other contrivances to fool the enemy.

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

A round, glass-walled museum that opened in 2004. It is built with the architectural concept of "a museum open to the city like a park," aiming to provide a space where anyone can visit anytime and encounter various experiences.

Yamanaka Onsen

The greatest hot spring resort in the Hokuriku region with traditional Japanese inns facing the Kakusen Gorge along the Daishoji River. It is said that it was discovered by a Buddhist priest, Gyoki, over 1,300 years ago. In addition, the poet, Matsuo Basho, wrote a poem praising the area.

Shiroyone Senmaida ("A thousand white rice paddies")

Shiroyone Senmaida represents the terraced rice fields of the agricultural complex "Noto's Satoyama and Satoumi" ("Abundant mountains and sea of the Noto Peninsula") registered as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS). It faces the Sea of Japan; the picturesque scenery of layers of small rice fields reaching the shore is also a Nationally Designated Important Cultural Property as well as being one of Japan's 100 best terraced rice fields.

Myoryuji Temple (Ninja Temple)

The temple was constructed on the orders of the third lord of the Kaga Domain, Maeda Toshitsune, in 1643. It is popularly known as the "Ninja Temple" as it has a complex architectural structure of 23 rooms, 29 staircases in a 4-story, 7-level building with hidden chambers, tunnels and staircases, various traps, escape pits, and other contrivances to fool the enemy.

Takada Castle Cherry Blossom Viewing for 1 Million People

The cherry blossom festival at Takada Park is known as one of the three major nocturnal cherry blossom viewing events in Japan. Lighted up Sanjyu Yagura, the three-tiered turret of Takada Castle, and some 4,000 blooming cherry trees illuminated by about 3,000 traditional Japanese bonbori lights and enchantingly reflected in the water of the moat continue to fascinate visitors from all over Japan and abroad.

Tarai bune: the Tub-Shaped Boat

The tarai bune, or tub-shaped boat, was devised for gathering wakame seaweed and other sea products in numerous narrow coves along the deeply indented Ogi-kaigan coastline. The current shape of the boat is believed to have evolved as a result of repeated improvements from a laundry tub. Visitors can experience a ride in the tarai bune at Ogi Port and Yajima-Kyojima on Sado Island.

Mt. Yahiko-san

Mt. Yahiko-san is the object of worship at Yahiko Shrine, and has been known by the honorific name "Oyahiko-sama" since ancient times. It is one of the most revered spots in the country. It stands 634 meters tall. Yahiko Shrine is located on top of the mountain.

Mt. Myoko-san

A stratovolcano 2,454 meters in height with magnificent natural season after season such as "Hane Uma" ("prancing horse"), an artistic natural figure created by the snow that signifies the beginning of spring, fresh greenery in summer, vivid foliage in fall and snow scenes in winter. The mountain is very popular with climbers in the summer.